1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

133 tains. From each pocket between these mountains an ice-
cold affluent comes swirling down to the main river. The
137 predominant tree in the river valleys is the cedar[4] which in
many cases attains great girth and height. Cottonwoods
flourish in places, and everywhere there is an almost impene-
trable undergrowth of devil's club, berry bushes, and other
shrubbery of almost tropical density. On the lower slopes of
the mountains, moss-festooned pines and spruces are the most
common trees, gradually becoming smaller and fewer until the
133 barren peaks are reached. The mountains rise so precipitously
that their snowcaps and glaciers seem to overhang the valley,
a narrow ribbon of green winding far below. The range of
vision from the bank of the river is limited by the all-encircling
mountains. Here and there a distant vista opens up to expose
peak after peak, but on the whole there is a feeling of confine-
ment, in contrast with the open wastes of the upper country
where the Bella Coola rises. Mountains, forests, flowing water,
these are the three dominant impressions of the country (see
Plate 6).

●136 The mammals of central British Columbia, although com-
paratively common, have never been of primary importance.
[291] The marten, the wolverine, the lynx, and bears, both black
and grizzly, were formerly hunted for their skins to serve as
[262] cloaks. Deer were killed whenever possible, but formed a
negligible item of diet. The beaver also was prized for its
[439] flesh. The skins of moose and caribou were traded from the
Carrier Indians, but neither of these animals was found in the
[286] Bella Coola area. The mammal of greatest economic impor-
[237] tance was the mountain goat, the wool of which was woven into
blankets. Smoked goat meat was formerly found in every
[251] house and was almost the only flesh available during the
[262] winter. Small game was abundant, but seals were a luxury.
Neither were birds of great importance to the Bella Coola.
[223] Members of the tribe resident near the sea-coast used to kill

[4]Appendix C contains a glossary of the scientific names of the flora and fauna mentioned in this monograph.

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

quantities of ducks and geese, and the inhabitants of the inland villages sometimes made hunting expeditions to the nesting places of wild-fowl in the lakes of the interior uplands. Although numbers of birds were sometimes killed in this way, they were never a steady article of diet. The same is true of grouse. Always plentiful, these birds were commonly killed, but never in large numbers.

The basis of the food supply was fish. The river teemed with salmon, which enabled the country to support its relatively large population. Spring, sockeye, hump-back, dog, and cohoe salmon, all entered the river in thousands during the spring and summer, while the steel-head could be caught throughout the year. They were taken in weirs and their flesh smoked for winter use. Throughout the year, salmon was the principal article of diet. Second in importance was the olachen, a fish somewhat resembling a herring, which entered the river in great numbers during April or May. They were taken in purse-like nets,[1] allowed to rot for ten days or two weeks, and then boiled. The grease was skimmed off and kept indefinitely to be used as a relish for other foods. It was always a sign of poverty if a person were obliged to eat berries without olachen grease. Trout and bull-heads were found in the river, but were not sufficiently plentiful to be of importance.

Although no form of agriculture was practised, the Bella Coola used vegetable food to a considerable extent. Berries were abundant; some were eaten raw, but many more were pounded into a pulpy mass and dried in the sun. Cakes prepared in this way kept indefinitely and formed one of the regular winter foods. The bark of the hemlock and cottonwood was eaten, as well as the roots of many plants. In recent years many of these have not been used, so that an investigator is apt to overlook their great importance in early times. Although useless for food, the cedar was the corner-stone of Bella Coola material culture. From its trunk were split out, with wedges, the wide planks which formed

[1] See Appendix A for a description of olachen fishing.

2:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

hers, which, with her supernatural power, she was able to do. She reluctantly granted his request, and Raven became very proud of his splendid locks. 539*

Next year, when Raven caught sockeye salmon he obeyed his wife's instructions by carefully hanging the fish up to dry without removing the heads. One day, however, his long hair became entangled with the teeth of a drying salmon, and in a fit of anger he wrenched off its head, throwing it outside the door. His wife was so vexed and grieved that she cried and cried until her face was swollen and Raven became frightened at her continued lamentation. After he had left the house, Sockeye Salmon told her sisters-in-law to make a fire and put on it all her personal possessions. She said that she intended to leave that night, and that the smoke would animate her husband's salmon, but not those caught by his sisters. When it was dark she carried out her threat. She whistled, and Raven's fish came to life; then she ran to the river, raised the edge of the water as if it had been a blanket and plunged beneath, followed by them.

Raven tried in vain to pursue, but lost both his wife and his salmon.

Animal Stories

Raven is more frequently endowed with human characteristics to serve as the central figure in stories than any other bird or mammal, but the following are examples of similar tales centring around other figures. 538 825

MINK AND CAT-FISH[32]

539*

Once upon a time, long, long ago, before men and animals had grown so unlike one another, Mink went to the home of a Cat-Fish woman, who politely invited him to stay for a meal. When he had finished eating he said to his hostess:

"Are you afraid of anything?"

"No," she replied.

"Are you not afraid of Grizzly Bear?"

"No," answered the woman again.

Mink repeated his question with regard to Wolf, Black Bear, Wolverine, Cougar, and all the other fierce animals, but Cat-Fish assured him that she feared none of them. At length he asked:

"Are you afraid of Owl?"[33]

[32]There are no true cat-fish in Bella Coola; the species so designated is probably one of the sculpins.

[33]He meant the western horned owl.

[136]

[see pp. 419-433. — ANALYST]

5: Smith E-5 (1920-1923) 1929 NE6 Bellacoola NE6
Carrier NE7

Fomes Laricis (Jacq.), more generally known as **Polyporus officinalis** Fries, A SHELF FUNGUS

Bella Coola: This (?) fungus ground, steeped in water, and the decoction taken internally for gonorrhoea.

Southern Carrier: If found on the Douglas fir tree, dried, powdered, a handful steeped in boiling water and the hot decoction taken internally as an emetic and purgative. Said to act within an hour. Not used if found on any other tree.

(According to Dr. John Dearness, this is a medical polypore, perhaps the only fungus used by pharmacists. Park, Davis, and Company make a fluid extract and a triturate which is prescribed for the relief of night sweats in tuberculosis. The fungus is a cathartic in large doses. Its medicinal virtues have long been known in the old world.)

Bovista pila B. and C., PUFF BALL

Bella Coola: Spores dusted on wounds, sores of gonorrhoea, and suppurating sores other than boils.

LICHEN

Bella Coola: A certain long, white lichen, if found on the red alder tree, warmed, and applied to a broken boil or suppurating sore.

Sticta sp., LICHEN

Bella Coola: Entire plant, if from red-osier dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera* Michx.) or crab apple (*Pyrus diversifolia* Bong.), but not from willow (*Salix* sp.), boiled, and five cupfuls of the hot decoction taken internally daily for pain in the stomach, but not for diarrhoea, constipation, or vomiting. Neither a purgative nor an astringent.

Entire plant boiled and the decoction used as an eye-wash.

Entire plant pulverized and applied to skin.

Southern Carrier: Not used.

KELP

Bella Coola: A small kelp found on the rocks sometimes used for a sweat bath. *See* western dock, page 56.

WOOD SAP

Bella Coola: The sap that oozes from any kind of wood when burning considered a good remedy for sores.

MOUNTAIN GOAT

Oreamnos Montanus, Ord., MOUNTAIN GOAT

Bella Coola: Mountain goat fat boiled with droppings of geese that had fed on roots, and the mixture given to babies once or twice a day for colds.

Goat meat with droppings of the bushy-tailed woodrat, commonly called packrat (*Neotoma cinerea*), taken internally with water as a remedy for nursing babies when they had colds.

5: Smith E-5 (1920-1923)1929 NE6 Bellacoola NE6
Carrier NE7
Tsimshian NE 15

SKUNK

Spilogale, Spotted Skunk, or **Mephitis**, Striped Skunk

Bella Coola: Oil not used as a remedy.

Southern Carrier: Oil warmed, and a cupful taken as a purgative for worms.

HARE

Lepus americanus columbiensis Rhoads, The British Columbia Varying Hare

Northern Carrier: Hare opened, ruminating stomach containing something like the white of an egg removed, and the liquid applied to a foot blistered by frost-bite. Considered a sure cure.

RED SQUIRREL

Sciurus hudsonicus Erxleben

Bella Coola: Opened along the under side and applied as a remedy to badly broken chancres in the groin.

GIANT SLUG

Bella Coola: Slug made to crawl into a baby's mouth to cure loss of skin on the inside of its mouth.

Slug opened, and bound tightly over large cut.

SEA CUCUMBER

Bella Coola: Decoction of the water in which the sea cucumber was boiled, taken internally as a specific against heartburn. Not a purgative.

SPITTLE INSECT

Cercopidae, Spittle Insect, Frog Hopper

Bella Coola: "Fly spit," *i.e.*, the material surrounding a nymph of a spittle insect, applied to sores.

Southern Carrier: Not used.

WOODWORMS

Gitksan: Pulverised and applied to cuts.

COPPER

Bella Coola: Fine particles scraped from clean copper (but not from a weathered green surface) placed in sore eyes.

Gitksan: Copper ground, poured into a vessel of cold water, first water poured off, and second water taken internally as a harmless contraceptive.

CHARCOAL

Northern Carrier: Charcoal daubed under the eyes to prevent snow-blindness.